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## Can Anyone Keep a Secret?

**S**ounding surprisingly like most of his recent predecessors, Jimmy Carter defended the propriety of CIA undercover operations last week and said the real problem was that too many people had official access to knowledge about them. His show of concern, on his TV news conference and in various private encounters, was prompted by his first serious brush with the problem of leaks—in this case the disclosure of secret CIA payments to Jordan's King Hussein (NEWSWEEK, Feb. 28). Carter reported that he was reviewing all current covert operations and had not found "anything illegal or improper" thus far. What troubled him instead was the matter of *keeping* them covert. "It can be," he said, "extremely damaging to our relationship with other nations, to the potential security of our country even in peacetime, for these kinds of operations which are legitimate and proper to be revealed."

All week long, Carter pressed his case, and there were indications that some leaders in Congress were willing to respond—not only by reducing the access of members to company secrets but by considering new legislation to tighten protections against intelligence leaks. The President, during a visit to the State Department, warned that "we are now in a position where some key intelligence sources are becoming reluctant to deal with us for fear of exposure." Back at the White House, he told a group of congressmen that he had personally attempted to discourage publication of the Hussein

story by The Washington Post a fortnight ago. "I thought it was irresponsible," one of those present recalled Carter saying. "I pleaded with them. . . ." He did not blame the legislators for the Hussein leak; the Administration believes the source to have been a former U.S. ambassador to Jordan. But Carter, NEWSWEEK learned, did tell the congressmen that he had scrapped another proper though sensitive CIA operation rather than take the risk of disclosing it to members of the Hill's oversight committees.

**Contact:** What the President wanted was for Congress to put both its houses in order by setting up a single, joint intelligence committee to be entrusted with top cloak-and-dagger secrets.\* After listening to Carter and later Vice President Mondale, House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill pronounced himself sympathetic to the idea. At the least he seemed likely to try shrinking the number of House committees concerned with intelligence from five to one. In the Senate, Intelligence Committee members asked new CIA director Stansfield Turner to help fashion new laws to limit disclosure and publication of national-security information. And chairman Daniel K. Inouye announced that he had asked the CIA and FBI to warn him of any attempts by foreign intelligence agents to contact committee members and staffers; several members said they were confused and shocked by the idea of being monitored.

Stepped-up concern with security came too late for King Hussein. In an exclusive interview with NEWS-

WEEK's Arnaud de Borchgrave, the King expressed anger over the disclosure of CIA payments and intimations that they were for his personal benefit. He said the CIA was just another branch of the U.S. Government whose aid helped his country carry out mutually advantageous policies. Jordan has often helped stabilize the turbulent Middle East—for example, by joining the effort to defeat a Soviet-supplied, Communist-backed rebellion in the Dhofar Province of Oman in southern Arabia. Jordan also played a key role in weaning the Yemen Arab Republic from Soviet influence and in protecting the United Arab Emirates against a possible Communist or pro-Iraqi coup. It could thus be argued that the U.S. was receiving value for money—or did until the secret flow of company cash to Amman leaked out.

—DAVID M. ALPERN with NICHOLAS HORROCK and HENRY W. HUBBARD in Washington

\*For his own part, the President wanted to cut the number of executive-branch officials informed about covert intelligence operations from 49 to 5: himself, Vice President Walter Mondale, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and CIA director Stansfield Turner.

